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ABSTRACT

This book overviews the colonial history of the Torres Strait Islanders and the role of the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the government of Queensland (Australia) in their education from 1873 until 1941. Section 1 examines the educational implications of European contact and argues that although schooling was an important feature of LMS and Queensland government contact, educational policies, practices, and outcomes were more influenced by the local context and island customs. Section 2 focuses on missionary and government educational policies and their implementation. Despite the colonial intent of the LMS and Queensland and differences in their educational ideologies, policies, and school practices, local patterns of schooling emerged under both regimes. Of particular significance were the islands' remote and scattered geography, privations of life, roles of local officials, curriculum adaptations, and relatively unsupervised teachers with their own teaching styles and forms of school organization. Section 3 explores reasons for the strong influence of the local context in the development of schooling. Issues raised include curriculum patterns, the roles of White and indigenous teachers, and the training of islanders for teaching. The role of Queensland educational officials, White teachers who exceeded requirements, Islander teachers who used bilingual and bicultural teaching styles, and forms of Islander teacher training frustrated the achievement of colonial educational aims. Yet, in the circumstances of LMS and Queensland control of the Islands, there was never sufficient scope for total independence at the school level. Section 4 explores the resistance of Islander communities to schooling and how they evaluated schooling in terms of Island customs and their expectations to learn "proper English," to know about White people and their customs, and to use that knowledge to manage the forces of change. Includes photographs, maps, a bibliography, and an index. (LP)